

2008 Jefferson Awards Finalist: Bill Burwinkel

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For the past few days, 9News has been telling you about people in our community who are doing amazing work as volunteers.

These people have been nominated for the 2008 Jefferson Award, considered the Nobel Prize for volunteers.

Bill Burwinkel, who created the "[Adopt A Class Foundation](#)," is one of this year's nominees.

"To be a volunteer and have the opportunity to take an idea like Adopt A Class and move it to where it's at today has just been an incredibly rewarding experience for myself," said Burwinkel.

Five years ago, Bill Burwinkel and his team of employees decided to adopt a class at Oyler Elementary in Lower Price Hill for Christmas.

"After experiencing that event with my team, it was a life-altering event for us," said Burwinkel. "My team came back and said, 'We want to do more.'"

"I went out the next year and visited business throughout the local area, and that next Christmas, all 670 children were adopted," said Burwinkel. "And we had a great Christmas party. In fact, five years later, those 14 businesses are still involved with that school and with Adopt A Class."

And so began Adopt A Class, which has spread to eight schools in Cincinnati and five more in Portland, Oregon.

Burwinkel now spends 80% of his time on Adopt A Class and says this is his way of

"paying it forward."

That philosophy is stated on the home page of the Adopt A Class website:

"You can't live a perfect day without helping someone who can never repay you."

"You know, I'm very blessed," said Burwinkel. "I'm one of seven kids. Spent a little time running away from home. I dropped out of high school. Went in the Army and I have a successful business – and now's the time to repay everything that has been given to me."

The Jefferson Award will be given out this Thursday at a luncheon.

It is sponsored locally by the Rotary Club, the American Institute of Public Service and WCPO-TV.

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